



DAVID SANDERS, Ph.D.
Director

County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
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March 15, 2005

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Chair Pro Tem
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Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David Sanders, Ph.D. 
Director

**DECEMBER 14, 2004 BOARD AGENDA ITEM NUMBER 2: POINT OF
ENGAGEMENT SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM COUNTY WIDE EXPANSION PLAN**

On December 14, 2004, The Board of Supervisors directed our Department to report back to the Board in 90 days on: 1) the feasibility of and/or a plan to expand the front-end Point of Engagement Service Delivery system countywide and 2) work with First 5 LA Partnership for Families as DCFS rolls out the model. We have considered your request, and submit to you the following.

Point of Engagement Overview

In 1999, The Price Waterhouse Coopers audit recommended that the Department of Children and Family Services streamline and revise its case flow process to provide a faster response for services and that the Department provide, through the use of a team approach, an emphasis on more thorough case evaluations and investigations.

In response to this recommendation the Department developed the Point of Engagement (POE) service delivery system. The core components of POE include the use of Structured Decision Making (SDM), Community Development, Front-end Assessments, Differential Response, Alternative Response, Voluntary Services, Family

Preservation Services and Team Decision Making (see attached POE Process Flowchart).

POE is characterized by a seamless and timely transfer of responsibility from front end investigations to actual service delivery in order to provide more thorough investigations and needed services to children and families within their homes and communities. This new system utilizes a multi-disciplinary approach incorporating team decision-making and community collaboration. Additionally in this process, families are fully engaged and consulted with regarding areas of concern. When meeting with family members, every attempt is made to mitigate safety and risk factors by the exploration of family strengths and resources. These target interventions are aimed at avoiding, if possible, the removal of children from their homes. However, if children are unavoidably detained, POE seeks to specifically identify those activities and services that will be necessary to quickly reunify that child with his or her family.

This service delivery model was piloted in the Wateridge and Compton DCFS offices.

Pilot Results

The pilot has been very successful in both offices. Social workers have consistently expressed positive feelings about utilizing a strength-based approach to quickly engage and assess families. The use of more comprehensive assessments, Structured Decision Making tools, and team decision making have helped social workers make better casework decisions regarding safety and risk. Further, POE has ensured that families are quickly connected to necessary community resources and services, frequently ameliorating the need to remove children from their home. According to Detained Petition Filings Reports, the number of total detentions in Wateridge decreased 45% from calendar year 2003 to 2004. This decrease represents approximately 400 children that remained safely with their families instead of being placed in DCFS Foster Care. (See attached POE Pilot Outcomes). In Compton, the number of total detentions decreased 57% from July–December 2003 to July–December 2004. This decrease represents approximately 100 children that remained safely with their families instead of being placed in DCFS Foster Care. (See attached POE Pilot Outcomes).

Further, in the Wateridge office, between November 2003 and October 2004, 273 families and 652 children received Alternative Response services. Within those families, only 163 had subsequent or repeat referrals. 44 children had cases opened, with 26 of those being voluntary. Only 19 children, or 2.9% were removed/detained from home.

In Compton, since August 2004, at least 323 families, and 763 children have been referred to community resources (Differential Response). Of the 40 families referred in

August, only two had repeat referrals. One resulted in a court filing, and the other is presently a Voluntary Services case.

Based on the success of the pilot, the Department intends to expand this service delivery model countywide.

Feasibility of Countywide Roll out

Expanding the Point of Engagement Service Delivery model Countywide will not be without its challenges. However, for the greater good of children and families throughout Los Angeles County, we need to move forward, while simultaneously finding solutions for the presenting challenges. There have been frequent Labor Management meetings, which have highlighted some of those challenges that include staffing, community resources, continuous funding and quality control (see attached Union letter). In good faith, the Department is addressing these concerns.

Staffing

The Department received authority from the Chief Administrative Office to hire 284 Children's Social Workers and 71 Supervising Children's Social Workers. As a result, six Social Worker Academies have been scheduled to train entry level social workers. The first academy began December 6, 2005 and the culminating academy began March 14, 2005. Each academy runs for a span of eight weeks. Further, it is anticipated that the Department will be given the authority to hire on a continuous basis, with academies occurring quarterly hereafter. Staff exiting the current academies will be placed in those offices according to the POE roll out. Particular attention will be given to placing bilingual staff in those offices where the geographic demographics demonstrate the need. The Department is also considering a targeted bilingual hiring to fill this critical need. At the time of roll out, each office will be close to or surpass 120% staffing.

Community Resources

Each Regional Administrator has been tasked with actively pursuing resource development in their particular service community. This includes building upon relationships and partnerships with schools, faith organizations, community based organizations, mental health, law enforcement, substance abuse agencies, domestic violence agencies, elected city and state officials, community leaders, parenting and family organizations, neighborhood groups, and housing authorities. Many of the local offices have already developed Community Advisory Committees and hold monthly meetings to dialogue about key DCFS/Community concerns. By cultivating these partnerships, regional management is helping to build the community's capacity and commitment to address the service needs of families residing in their local geographic area.

DCFS views the Partnership for Families (PFF) initiative as a potentially valuable resource to augment our service response for children and families. As a result, DCFS administrators are participating in the planning process, meeting bi-monthly to recommend specific eligibility criteria for families, referral protocols, information-sharing policies, procedures for coordination with existing DCFS programs, and plans for joint DCFS/PFF training.

Funding

The Department is committed to funding those contracted agencies that make Point of Engagement a viable model, including agencies that provide Family Support, Alternative Response, and Family Preservation services. Funding for Family Support is secure through June 2005, and it is expected that new, performance-based contracts for "Promoting Safe and Stable Families" (PSSF) will be in place by July 1, 2005.

In addition to funding associated with contracted services, the Department's Bureau of Finance is currently assessing the County's cost savings as a result of detention reduction, and proposing to reinvest those savings into front end services and resources.

Finally, the Department awaits the outcome of Title IV-E Waiver application, which will, if approved, financially assist in the efforts to target services and resources toward the front end of our service delivery system.

Rollout Readiness

In order to gauge each office's rollout readiness, DCFS administrative staff surveyed the regional managers to determine which workplace is most ready to move forward. Some of the factors considered include staffing levels, degree of community involvement, and current linkages to community resources. Those offices that proved most ready will be the first to rollout.

In planning for a successful rollout, each regional office will need to make appropriate preparations prior to implementation. To facilitate POE rollout, offices that are already established in the POE framework have volunteered to mentor offices beginning the rollout process. This office-to-office mentoring will continue until all offices are implementing POE. To further assist in this endeavor and to ensure that an adequate level of consistency is maintained during implementation, management has formulated a small rollout support team. This team will consult with and support regional management in the following activities: community outreach, identification of community

resources, proper staff alignment, and training enrollment. Once implementation begins, this team will assist in resolving implementation problems, and collect POE related data for analysis and continuous quality improvement.

POE Rollout

Attached are detailed training and implementation dates. The rollout is scheduled to begin April 4, 2005. The Inter-University Consortium will facilitate training, and the curriculum entails three days of interactive learning.

We are excited about the possibility of moving forward with this initiative. This undertaking will most certainly benefit the families we serve and bring us closer to achieving our desired outcomes of safety, permanency, and reduced reliance on out-of-home care.

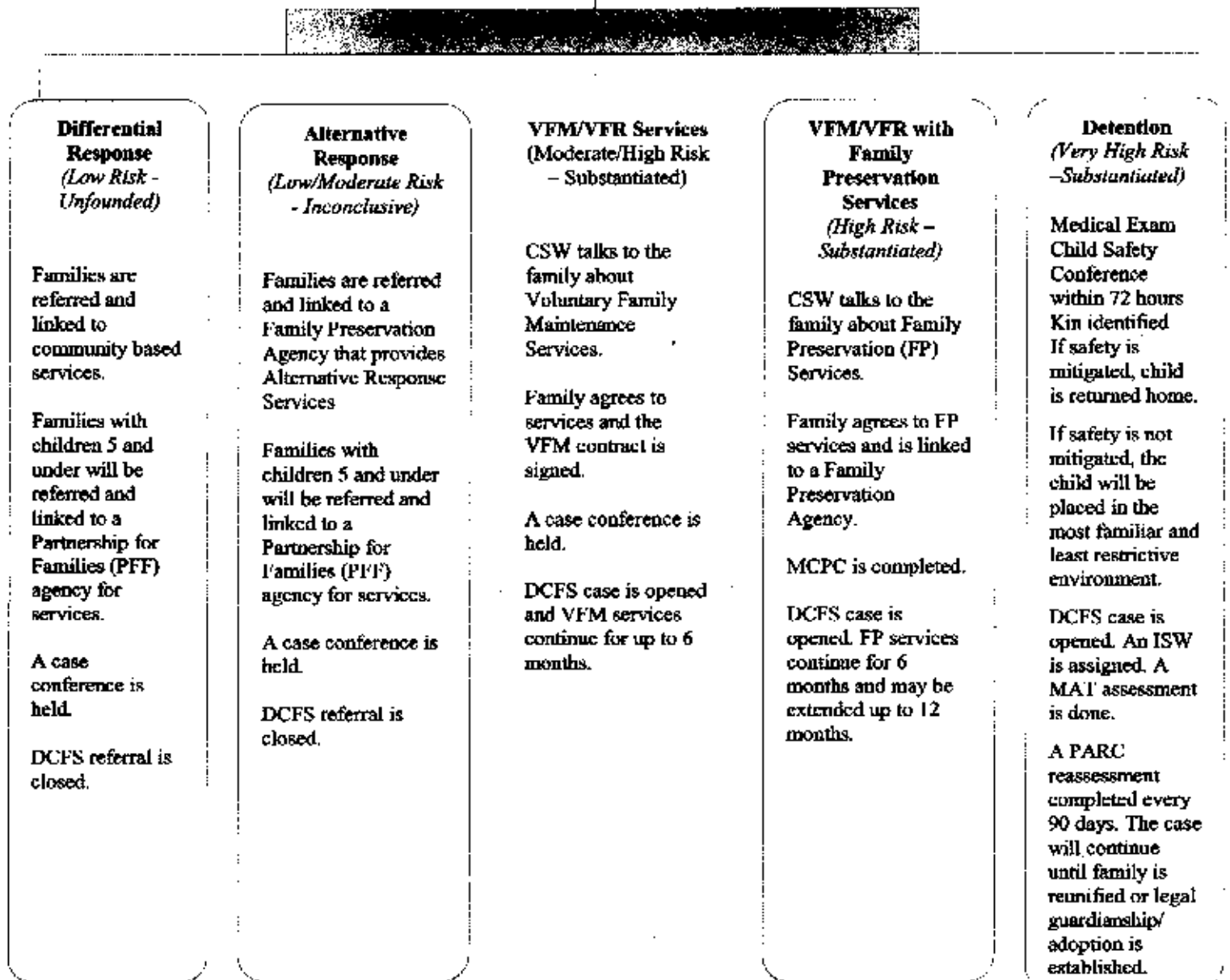
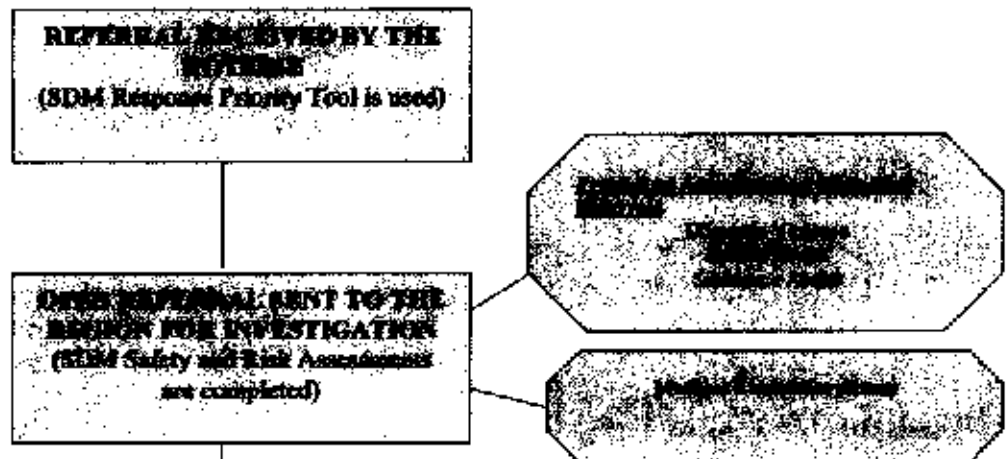
If you have any questions, please call me or your staff may contact Helen Berberian, Board Liaison, at (213) 351-5530.

DS:RC:mg

Attachments (4)

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board Of Supervisors

POINT OF ENGAGEMENT PROCESS FLOWCHART



Legend:

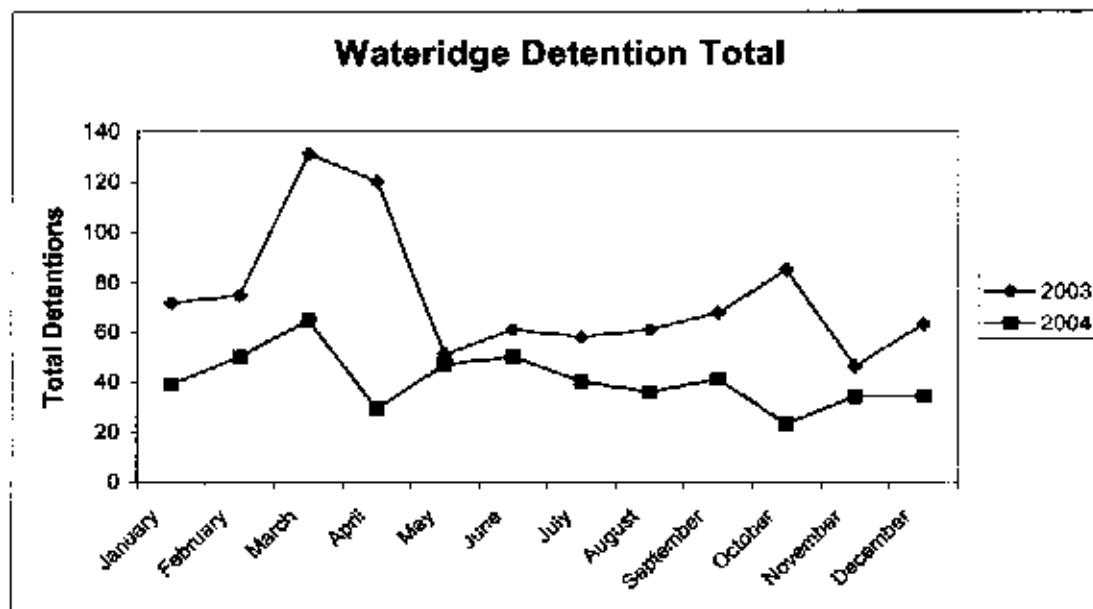
VFM – Voluntary Family Maintenance, VFR – Voluntary Family Reunification, MAT – Multidisciplinary Assessment Team, MCPC – Multidisciplinary Case Planning Committee, PARC – Permanency Action Review Committee, ISW – Intensive Service Worker, SDM – Structured Decision Making, ISW – Intensive Service Worker

POE PILOT OUTCOMES

WATERIDGE

In Wateridge the number of total detentions decreased 45% from calendar year 2003 to 2004. This decrease represents approximately 400 children that remained with their families instead of being placed in DCFS Foster Care. The table and graph below show the number of detentions per month for years 2003 and 2004.

	2003	2004
January	72	39
February	75	50
March	131	65
April	120	29
May	51	47
June	61	50
July	58	40
August	61	36
September	68	41
October	85	23
November	46	34
December	63	34
Total	891	488



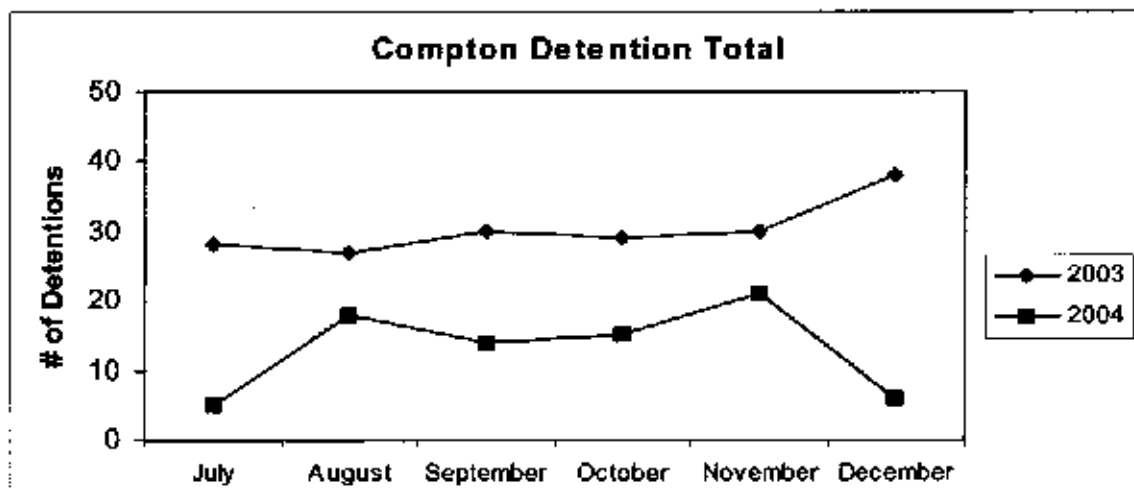
Wateridge Data Source:

2003 and 2004 data is from WIC 300 Detained Petition Filing Reports.

COMPTON

In Compton the number of total detentions decreased 57% from July – Dec. 2003 to July – Dec. 2004. This decrease represents approximately 100 children that remained with their families instead of being placed in DCFS Foster Care. The table and graph below show the number of detentions per month for six months in 2003 and 2004.

	2003	2004
July	28	5
August	27	18
September	30	14
October	29	15
November	30	21
December	38	6
Total	182	79



Note:

Only 6 months are compared here because the Compton Office became fully functioning in July. Reporting months prior to July would give an invalid representation because the Compton office was just beginning to serve children and families.

Compton Data Source:

2003 data is from CWS/CMS Datamart, ER Detentions based on Compton Zip Codes (provided by ITS). 2004 data is from the WIC 300 Detained Petition Filings Report.

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SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
AFI-CIO, CLC

February 10, 2005

Dr. David Sanders, PH.D.
Director Department of Children and Family Services
425 Shatto Place
Los Angeles, A 90020

RE: Local 535 Input for Response to BOS POE Motion

Dear Dr. Sanders:

As the union previously presented to the BOS, we agree that the Points of Engagement concept has the potential to achieve one of the goals of DCFS in reducing the reliance on out of home care and to keeping children safely in their homes and communities.

As we are aware, this concept is currently being piloted in the Wateridge and Compton offices. While there may have been some successes in reducing the number of children being removed from their homes and in diverting some families to community resources rather than continuing DCFS involvement in their lives, there are some very important issues which must be addressed and resolved prior to expanding POE to other offices.

- Caseload and work load issues need to be formally negotiated and agreed upon. It has become apparent that the increased responsibilities associated with POE are significant. Included but not limited to; the planning and organization of the various child safety conferences, coordination with community resources, and expanded child safety assessments, increased home call requirements and additional required tasks to dispo cases. These new responsibilities are all required in order to meet the POE protocol. In the mean time, social workers and supervisors are still required to perform all of their other assigned duties and responsibilities as well. In the various meetings which management and the union have held to discuss the progress of POE, this issue has been repeatedly raised by the affected rank and file staff. There needs to be either a serious reduction in the yardsticks for the affected offices or a drastic reduction of the workload. Without either/or the concept will not be able to sustain itself over the long haul.
- There needs to be a comprehensive study of the demographics of the service areas prior to expansion and a plan in place to staff appropriately. It has become apparent that in the pilot offices there is a

RE: LOCAL 535 INPUT FOR RESPONSE TO ROS POE MOTION

severe shortage of bilingual staff to meet the needs of the population in their service areas. The results of this have been that monolingual Spanish speaking clients have not been properly serviced. Also, the attrition rate for bilingual staff in these two offices has remained very high as a result of burn-out and low morale. Again, this has had a negative impact on the goals of POE.

- A definite and clear protocol for converting affected offices from traditional to POE mode needs to be established prior to considering expansion. It has been our experience that in the two pilot offices there has not been a conversion plan. The effects of this lack of conversion plan has resulted in social workers not being able to give their full focus to performing one specific function. An example of this is the Intensive Services Worker. This was a new position created specifically to deal with new court cases with the goal of providing intensive services to families a crisis mode and attempt to stabilize their situation. Initially, this position was being handled in a very haphazard manner with no one actually being assigned to perform the specific ISW function. Then there was the problem of actually purifying their files. It has clear that in order to perform this function properly the ISW must have a purified file. This problem also was found to exist in the Voluntary Services Units, who were still carrying generic cases along with VFM/VFR cases. In order to accomplish the goals of POE, it is essential that social workers are able to focus their efforts and become proficient in their specific function.
- It is essential that all of the necessary community resources be in place and that the funding sources for these services be sustained. If we expect to be able to keep children in their homes without DCFS involvement, then it is critical that the community "safety net" remain intact. During a brief period there was a time where funding for resources was temporarily disrupted and this had an adverse impact on the clients as well as the POE pilot. The success or failure of POE is highly dependent on the availability of community resources.
- There also needs to be the ability to monitor the expansion and implementation of POE in order to ensure that the protocols are being adhered to. This is an area of concern in that given the size of the agency and the various management styles there needs to be a clear and definite structure in how POE is rolled out and implemented. In the two pilot offices there have been some differences in how work flows and in the hand off system. In one office ER provides resource referrals to clients and SCSWs meet once weekly to assign cases to the services units in another office. ER strictly does investigations and hands the

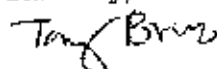
RE: LOCAL 535 INPUT FOR RESPONSE TO BOS POE MOTION

case off after holding the child safety conference. Again there is a need to standardize the service delivery system.

- There also needs to be a clear commitment from the BOS to adequately fund this new and innovative concept. Initially, it will mean having to provide expanded funding for emergency response and the services component in order to begin "closing the flood gates" of children and families entering the Child Welfare System. In the long term, as cases begin to attrition out, there will be a cost savings in the amount of dollars now spent on out of home care. POE along with Concurrent Planning will hopefully streamline the time to permanency and reduce the number of children actually requiring Child Welfare Services. But again, there is a price tag on POE. To put it succinctly, we cannot expect to get a Cadillac with Yugo money.

Based on the above mentioned points, it is clear that there are issues that must be addressed and resolved prior to expanding POE agency wide. It is incumbent on all parties concerned that work begins immediately in order to begin planning for a successful roll-out of POE.

Sincerely,



Tony Bravo
L.A. County Chapter President

c: Harold Walker

POE TRAINING/IMPLEMENTATION ROLL-OUT

Phase/Office	Training	Implementation
Pilot		
Wateridge		In Progress
Compton		In Progress
Phase 1		
Metro North	4/4/05 - 6/24/05	6/27/05
West LA		
Pomona		
Torrance		
Phase 2		
Covina	6/27/05 - 9/23/05	9/26/05
Specialized Svcs		
Hawthorne		
Belvedere		
Phase 3		
A. V. East	9/26/05 - 12/2/05	12/5/05
A.V. West		
Pasadena		
Century		
Phase 4		
Santa Fe Springs	12/5/05 - 2/17/06	2/20/06
Lakewood		
Phase 5		
North Hollywood	2/20/06 - 4/7/06	4/10/06
Santa Clarita		